TESTIMONY OF VANCE BLALOCK

The testimony of Vance Blalock, accompanied by his parents, was taken on April 7–8, 1964, at the Old Civil Courts Building, Royal and Conti Streets, New Orleans, La., by Mr. Wesley J. Liebeler, assistant counsel of the President's Commission.

Vance Blalock, having been first duly sworn, was examined and testified as follows:

Mr. LIEBELER. My name is Wesley J. Liebeler. I am a member of the legal staff of the President's Commission investigating the assassination of President Kennedy. Staff members have been authorized to take the testimony of witnesses by the Commission, pursuant to authority granted to the Commission by Executive Order No. 11130, dated November 29, 1963, and joint resolution of Congress No. 137. I understand, Vance, that Mr. Lee Rankin, who is general counsel of the Commission, wrote you a letter last week——

Mr. BLALOCK. That is right.

Mr. LIEBELER. And told you that I would be in touch with you concerning the taking of your testimony. I understand that Mr. Rankin enclosed with that letter a copy of the Executive order and of the resolution of Congress to which I have just referred, as well as a copy of the rules of procedure adopted by the Commission governing the taking of the testimony of witnesses. Did you receive that letter and those documents?

Mr. BLALOCK. Yes; I did.

Mr. LIEBELER. We want to inquire very briefly of you concerning an event which occurred some time in the summer of 1963 here in New Orleans. We understand that you were present at a meeting, a chance meeting, between Lee Harvey Oswald and Carlos Bringuier. Before we get into the details of that, however, would you state your full name for the record.

Mr. BLALOCK. Vance Douglas Blalock.

Mr. LIEBELER. Let the record show that your mother and father are here in the room with us. How old are you, Vance?

Mr. BLALOCK. I am 16.

Mr. LIEBELER. Where were you born?

Mr. BLALOCK. Lake Charles, La.

Mr. LIEBELER. Where do you live now?

Mr. BLALOCK. Metairie, La.

Mr. LIEBELER. How long have you lived there?

Mr. BLALOCK. Less than a year.

Mr. LIEBELER. Do you go to school?

Mr. BLALOCK. Yes, sir.

Mr. LIEBELER. Where?

Mr. BLALOCK. East Jefferson High School.

Mr. LIEBELER. What grade are you in at East Jefferson High School?

Mr. BLALOCK. Tenth.

Mr. LIEBELER. Do you know Carlos Bringuier?

Mr. BLALOCK. I have met him once.

Mr. LIEBELER. How did it happen that you met him?

Mr. BLALOCK. I went downtown with my friend, Philip Geraci. We went to a store to return funds that Philip had collected for the organization this man had had, and while I was there I met Carlos. That is how I met him.

Mr. LIEBELER. Did you have anything to do with these funds that were collected by your friend Geraci?

Mr. BLALOCK. No, sir; I didn't.

Mr. LIEBELER. That was entirely his operation?

Mr. BLALOCK. Yes.

Mr. LIEBELER. Do you remember where you went that day with Philip?

Mr. BLALOCK. Yes, sir; we went to Decatur Street, I believe it is. I am not sure. The store is the Casa Roca.

Mr. LIEBELER. What organization was it that Bringuier was running? Do you know?

Mr. BLALOCK. I couldn't say the Spanish name. The American name of it is the Cuban Student Revolutionary Organization.

Mr. LIEBELER. Can you tell me approximately when that was?

Mr. BLALOCK. Last part of the summer. I couldn't——

Mr. LIEBELER. Late July or early August would it be, or some time in August of 1963?

Mr. BLALOCK. August would be the closest I could get. I don't remember the exact date.

Mr. LIEBELER. Tell me the conversation that you and Philip had with Bringuier when you went into the store.

Mr. BLALOCK. Oh, we entered the store and Philip introduced me to Carlos, and I told him—I saw the funds Philip had collected for him, and I told him I was curious about what it was for, and then he explained for me how the organization worked and told me he received the funds from people in New Orleans and sent it to Florida, and that was his total business, and he explained that Communism was where the kids are supposed to tell everything on their parents, to obey the State and not their parents.

Mr. LIEBELER. Present at this conversation were just you and Philip and Carlos? Is that right?

Mr. BLALOCK. No; there was another man—must have worked at the store. He was present.

Mr. LIEBELER. Did you know what his name was?

Mr. BLALOCK. No, sir.

Mr. LIEBELER. Now while you were there in the store, did you notice anybody else present?

Mr. BLALOCK. Well, a man from a moving company or some trucking company came in. He had a radio that needed to be fixed, a broken radio, and Lee Harvey Oswald came in.

Mr. LIEBELER. Tell us, to the best of your recollection, the things that happened as far as Oswald was concerned.

Mr. BLALOCK. He walked up to us and leaned against the desk and listened

to the conversation. Then he started asking questions about the organization, and we were talking about guerrilla warfare, just in case the country got in war how young students could help, something in that nature, and then he started—then Oswald, Lee Harvey Oswald, asked Carlos Bringuier all about the organization and what part it played in the main movement in Florida.

Mr. LIEBELER. Did they say anything else? Was there more to the conversation?

Mr. BLALOCK. Let's see.

Mr. LIEBELER. Did this man who walked up introduce himself by name?

Mr. BLALOCK. I believe so, but I don't remember what name he gave.

Mr. LIEBELER. Are you now convinced that he was Lee Harvey Oswald?

Mr. BLALOCK. Yes, sir. I know his face. I recognized his face.

Mr. LIEBELER. But you don't remember that he mentioned the name Lee Harvey Oswald at that time?

Mr. BLALOCK. No.

Mr. LIEBELER. Did Oswald say anything about having been a Marine?

Mr. BLALOCK. Yes, sir; he did, and he explained that he took training in guerrilla warfare, and he told us how to blow up bridges, derail trains, make zip guns, make homemade gunpowder.

Mr. LIEBELER. He told you about this in detail?

Mr. BLALOCK. He told us how to blow up the Huey P. Long Bridge.

Mr. LIEBELER. Tell us just what he told you about that. I know you can't remember the exact words, but you can remember the substance of the conversation. We want you to tell us about it.

Mr. BLALOCK. He told us to put powder charges at each end of the bridge from the foundation to where the foundation meets the suspension part, and to blow that part up and the center part of the bridge would collapse.

Mr. LIEBELER. Did he talk about any other aspect of guerrilla warfare that you can remember?

Mr. BLALOCK. He said that if you don't have the materials you need always available, you had to do without stuff.

Mr. LIEBELER. Did he give any specific example of that?

Mr. BLALOCK. Gunpowder, high explosives.

Mr. LIEBELER. Did he tell you how to do without gunpowder in these activities?

Mr. BLALOCK. He told us how to derail a train without gunpowder.

Mr. LIEBELER. What did he say about that?

Mr. BLALOCK. He said put a chain around the railroad track and lock it to the track with a lock.

Mr. LIEBELER. And then when the train hit the chain it would derail the train?

Mr. BLALOCK. Yes, sir.

Mr. LIEBELER. Did he say that he knew how to make gunpowder?

Mr. BLALOCK. Yes, sir; he told us the formula, and I—saltpeter and nitrate—some formula—I don't remember.

Mr. LIEBELER. Did he say anything about guns?

Mr. BLALOCK. About zip guns, how to make them out of tubing and a plunger.

Mr. LIEBELER. Did he say something to the effect that he knew all about guns?

Mr. BLALOCK. No; he told us he had a manual that explained all about guns, a Marine manual, and that he had training in guns, trained with guns.

Mr. LIEBELER. Do you remember anything else that he said?

Mr. BLALOCK. Not right offhand.

Mr. LIEBELER. Did he talk to Bringuier about helping Bringuier in this organization, or just what was the general context of this conversation? Was this just a general discussion of guerrilla warfare, or did it relate to the activities of Bringuier's anti-Castro organization? What can you remember?

Mr. BLALOCK. He just asked him about the anti-Castro organization and asked him to explain it to him, and he said he was interested in finding out how it operated. He didn't say he wanted to join it: He just said he was interested in it. Oh, and Bringuier gave him literature, a Cuban newspaper and leaflets or booklets.

Mr. LIEBELER. Was there any discussion of politics?

Mr. BLALOCK. Not to my recollection.

Mr. LIEBELER. Was there any mention of President Kennedy?

Mr. BLALOCK. No, sir. I couldn't say for sure there was no mention of President Kennedy. I don't think there was.

Mr. LIEBELER. What did you think of Oswald?

Mr. BLALOCK. He seemed like a very intelligent man to me, well spoken, looked well dressed, well groomed.

Mr. LIEBELER. Did you think anything else about him, or is that about it?

Mr. BLALOCK. That is the impression that I got right at the moment.

Mr. LIEBELER. Did he say anything about Florida?

Mr. BLALOCK. Just mentioned the Cuban anti-Castro organization there.

Mr. LIEBELER. What did he say about that?

Mr. BLALOCK. I don't remember exactly, but I think he said he had been there and he had looked into it. I couldn't say for sure on that.

Mr. LIEBELER. Did he mention the name of the organization?

Mr. BLALOCK. No, sir. No, I don't recall any name.

Mr. LIEBELER. Do you remember being interviewed about this subject by an FBI agent?

Mr. BLALOCK. Yes, sir; I do, during the Christmas holidays.

Mr. LIEBELER. Do you remember his name?

Mr. BLALOCK. No, sir; I don't. All I know is a Lieutenant or something like that.

Mr. LIEBELER. Do you think you would remember his name if I mentioned it to you?

Mr. BLALOCK. I might, or my mother might. She was present.

Mr. LIEBELER. Your mother was present when you were interviewed by the FBI?

Mr. BLALOCK. Yes.

Mr. LIEBELER. Would it refresh your recollection if I told you that the report that I have of the interview that you had with the FBI agent indicates that the man's name was Kevin J. Herrigan?

Mr. BLALOCK. Herrigan? No. No; I don't remember that name.

Mr. LIEBELER. Do you remember talking to the FBI agent about Oswald's remark concerning having been to Florida?

Mr. BLALOCK. No, sir; I don't remember what I told the FBI agent. I don't remember anything about Oswald saying—only that I think he said he had been there.

Mr. LIEBELER. Well, the report that I have here says that you seemed to remember Oswald mentioning something about having recently visited something called the Casa Nostra, C-a-s-a N-o-s-t-r-a. Do you remember saying anything about that to the FBI man?

Mr. BLALOCK. Yes, sir; I remember mentioning the organization, but I couldn't remember the name. That organization was mentioned in the conversation with Carlos Bringuier and Harvey Oswald.

Mr. LIEBELER. It was?

Mr. BLALOCK. I believe so.

Mr. LIEBELER. Do you remember that it was Oswald who mentioned it?

Mr. BLALOCK. I don't remember which one mentioned it first.

Mr. LIEBELER. And it was mentioned as being a Cuban organization in Florida? Is that your recollection?

Mr. BLALOCK. Yes, sir; I think that is the name they mentioned. It could be something similar. I know I got this Mafia name mixed up with a Cuban organization name.

Mr. LIEBELER. Well, you know that that name that I just mentioned, Casa Nostra, is very similar to the Cosa Nostra. Do you think you may have been confused at the time you talked with him?

Mr. BLALOCK. Well, I meant the Cuban organization. I may have said the Mafia, the Cosa Nostra.

Mr. LIEBELER. You may have used that name?

Mr. BLALOCK. But I meant the Cuban——

Mr. LIEBELER. You meant some Anti-Castro Cuban organization?

Mr. BLALOCK. Yes, sir.

Mr. LIEBELER. So the best you can recall, Oswald didn't say that he had recently visited someone in the Cosa Nostra?

Mr. BLALOCK. No, sir. Yes, sir.

Mr. LIEBELER. But you do recall sort of vaguely that Oswald did say that he had been in Florida and he had visited an Anti-Castro Cuban organization there?

Mr. BLALOCK. Yes, sir; I do.

Mr. LIEBELER. Can you remember anything else about this incident in the store that day when Oswald came in?

Mr. BLALOCK. Oh, he said he lived on Magazine Street.

Mr. LIEBELER. Did he give his exact address to you? Do you remember?

Mr. BLALOCK. I don't believe he gave his exact address, but I couldn't say for sure.

Mr. LIEBELER. Did he say anything about whether he was working or not, whether he had a job?

Mr. BLALOCK. I don't remember if he said anything about his job.

Mr. LIEBELER. Did he tell you anything about his background? Did he say he was from New Orleans or anything about that?

Mr. BLALOCK. No, sir; I don't remember anything about that.

Mr. LIEBELER. Can you think of anything else that happened?

Mr. BLALOCK. Philip Geraci and I started following him home after we both left the store. Oswald, Philip and I both left the store about the same time. We started to follow Oswald to his house just out of curiosity, and I recollect that Oswald said he would give us his Marine manual if we ever came back, if we contacted him.

Mr. LIEBELER. That he would give you the Marine manual if you saw each other at the store again?

Mr. BLALOCK. At the store or just saw each other, if we would contact him and get it, we could have it. If he saw us again, he would give it to us.

Mr. LIEBELER. How long did you continue to follow him home? Did you just walk out and walk down the street with him, or did you sort of shadow him or——

Mr. BLALOCK. No, sir. We walked out the door. We both started different directions, and Philip and I said, "Why don't we follow him and get the Marine manual now, nothing else to do." We started to go to the corner, and we didn't see him, so we went on our way.

Mr. LIEBELER. Did you ever see the Marine manual?

Mr. BLALOCK. No, sir; I didn't.

Mr. LIEBELER. Did you ever talk to Mr. Bringuier again after that?

Mr. BLALOCK. No, sir.

Mr. LIEBELER. You never saw Carlos again until just today——

Mr. BLALOCK. No, sir.

Mr. LIEBELER. When you saw him come out of this room and leave the building?

Mr. BLALOCK. Yes, sir.

Mr. LIEBELER. Are you and Philip good friends?

Mr. BLALOCK. I wouldn't say real close friends, but we are friends.

Mr. LIEBELER. Did you talk about this incident or talk about Oswald at all after this time but prior to the assassination?

Mr. BLALOCK. No, sir; I don't believe we did. We talked about the Cuban Student Organization.

Mr. LIEBELER. Were you aware of the fact that Oswald was subsequently arrested here in New Orleans in connection with his activity on behalf of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee?

Mr. BLALOCK. No; I didn't know about that until after the assassination.

Mr. LIEBELER. You didn't hear Oswald debate Carlos on the radio program——

Mr. BLALOCK. No, sir.

Mr. LIEBELER. Or you didn't see Oswald on television?

Mr. BLALOCK. No, sir. I might have. I just don't remember it.

Mr. LIEBELER. Did Philip say anything about having seen these things?

Mr. BLALOCK. Not to me he didn't.

Mr. LIEBELER. So you never had any real discussions, as far as you remember, with Philip about Oswald until the time of the assassination? Is that correct?

Mr. BLALOCK. That is correct.

Mr. LIEBELER. You must have talked to Philip about Oswald after the assassination.

Mr. BLALOCK. Yes.

Mr. LIEBELER. Did you recall to each other and discuss with each other the meeting that you had with Oswald in the store on Decatur Street at that time?

Mr. BLALOCK. I think I was the one that recognized him. I called it to Philip's attention, and the next day at school he said, "Yes, that is the man we met at the store." I recognized Oswald late one night when I was just about going to bed. I told my Daddy, "I went uptown and met that man up there."

Mr. LIEBELER. This was shortly after the assassination?

Mr. BLALOCK. Yes; during the time they didn't have any shows but the funeral and——

Mr. LIEBELER. [Exhibiting photograph to witness.] Let me show you a picture that has been marked as Exhibit 1 to the affidavit of Jesse J. Garner taken at New Orleans, April 6, 1964, and I ask you if you recognize the individual portrayed in that picture.

Mr. BLALOCK. Yes, sir; I recognize him.

Mr. LIEBELER. And do you recognize him as the man you met in the store that day?

Mr. BLALOCK. Yes, sir; Lee Harvey Oswald.

Mr. LIEBELER. Can you think of anything else now about your contact with Oswald, or can you think of anything else that you know about him that I haven't asked you about and you think the Commission should know about?

Mr. BLALOCK. I can't think of anything else.

Mr. LIEBELER. I don't have any other questions. If you can't think of anything else, we will terminate the deposition. On behalf of the Commission, I want to thank you very much.